

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR JUNE 5

BY THE EDITOR

Jesus Condemned.—Matthew 27: 11-26

GOLDEN TEXT.—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I Timothy 1: 15.

LESSON THOUGHT.—The great question for each soul to decide is, What shall I do with Jesus. On the decision depends our eternal destiny.

Home Readings

Smitten and Afflicted, Matt. 26: 27-68.

Jesus Condemned, Matt. 27: 1-26.

Herod's Mocking, Luke 23: 1-12.

Jesus Faultless, Luke, 23: 13-26.

Behold the Man, John 19: 1-7.

Behold your King, John 19: 16.

Introductory Notes

In our last lesson Jesus was in an upper room in Jerusalem where he instituted the ordinances of the Lord's house. After singing a hymn he and his disciples went out of Jerusalem to a "familiar garden where took place the sorrowful scene of Gethsemane, and the victory of him who prayed." The scene in the garden is familiar to Bible readers, nevertheless it should be read in connection with this lesson so that it may be fresh in the minds of all. It was about one o'clock Friday morning when Judas came directing the chief priests and the Roman soldiers with their weapons to the place where Jesus was, and here betrayed him with a kiss. The thirty pieces of silver were not much enjoyed by Judas.

Meaning of the Text

11-14 *Governor*. Pilate having heard the accusations of the Jews, now questioned Jesus. *Art thou—King?* The emphasis is on thou, as if he had said, Dost thou, a poor despised Nazarene, claim to be the king of the Jews? *Thou sayest*. The meaning is, "What thou sayest is true." Making himself a king was one of the accusations against Jesus. *Answered nothing*. It would have been useless to make any reply to people who were determined to have their own way in the matter. *Governor marvelled*. This silence was a mystery to Pilate as he expected Jesus to make his defense before the Jews. If he was innocent, why not assert his innocence? Because it would have been useless.

15-18 *At feast*. That is the Passover feast, to be observed that very evening. *Release prisoner*. "As a fitting accompaniment to a feast that celebrated the redemption of the nation from slavery." *Whom they would*. The people had choice as to who should be released. *Barabbas*. He may have been one who led an insurrection against Roman domination, and that would naturally make him a favorite with the Jews. *Barabbas or Jesus?* It was a choice between these two, and Pilate hoped that the choice would be Jesus. *For envy*. Pilate knew why Jesus was delivered to him, and knowing this, he

should have exercised his authority for the right.

19 *Was set*. During the trial. The dream of Pilate's wife made him reluctant in yielding to the wishes of the people, especially so since it was accompanied by the warning that he should have nothing to do with that just man. On the closest examination Pilate could find no fault in Jesus, and now this dream comes to his wife, and thus there was a powerful influence brought to bear on the action of the governor.

20-23 *Persuaded* etc. The multitude would have been inclined to do right, but the rulers used their influence against justice. And yet these people claimed to be the children of God! *What shall I do then with Jesus?* He should not have asked the crowd what to do with Jesus, but settle the matter in the light of the evidence for and against Jesus. The decision should have been according to truth, right and justice, and not according to the sinful desires of the people.

24-26 *Washed his hands*. To show that he was not guilty of the crime of crucifying Christ. His heart he should have washed. During all these centuries the church says in her confession, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate." *I am innocent*. His saying so did not make it so. His blood be on us, poor Jews, so it was then and is yet.

The Lesson Applied

1. *Find No Fault*.—Pilate found no fault in Jesus. Neither has any one else found any fault in him since that day for the simple reason that there were no faults in him. The world has been challenged to find a flaw in the character of Jesus and it has been unable to do so. As much can not be said for any other person who ever lived. Faults are recorded against Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and in fact against all God's great men, but here is one who was absolutely perfect, and he is the one held up to the world as our Savior. It is a comfort to know that such a one is our example, and that we shall be like him.

2. *A Fatal Choice*.—The Jews were offered the choice between Christ, the perfect man, and Barabbas, the murderer or criminal. What a foolish choice they did make. On that choice depended the future destiny of the Jewish nation, and in their blindness and prejudice they deliberately chose death and destruction, when it might have been life and blessedness. Such choices are still made. Thousands prefer the world to Christ. They are not Christians, because there is something they love more than they do the Lord Jesus. How blind people are to their own best interests. In temporal matters they do not act so foolishly. If people would exercise the same judgment in things eternal and spiritual as they do in things temporal, the world would all be Christian. What choice have you made?

3. *What to do with Jesus*.—The releasing of Barabbas still left Jesus on Pilate's hands. It is so yet. Whatever one may do, the question, "What then shall I do with Jesus?"

ance, and bade her work it out, and she would find peace.

"It is easy to see how ineffectual such means would be to satisfy her aroused conscience. She left the priest, and began to seek help in Protestant church services. She learned of a Saviour from sin, and had already accepted him in spirit; so before she went home from her talk with me she had joyfully and fully committed herself to Jesus. I visited her soon, and found her mother anxious for forgiveness, like the daughter; and at the next communion both mother and daughter were sitting together at Christ's table. Well might I watch after such an experience for signs of my Master's witness in unlikely hearts. Everywhere there are those who want rest; and there is no rest away from Christ."

Contact With God

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To keep in unimpeded contact with God, there are two conditions which remain always the same. One is ardently and predominantly to desire it. The other is to mortify certain affections which are inconsistent with it. "I have set the Lord at my right hand." Is it not plain that it must be the master-thought of life, the consistent preoccupation of the soul, if any sustained converse with God is to be secured? For, even in the closer relationships of this life, it is not possible to keep intimately near to another soul without an assiduous observance of that suggestion of the lover: "I think of thee by night, I think of thee by day." To keep in contact with God it must become the definite object of life, the thought of the day-break—"My eyes prevent the dawn; of the hot noon—"As the hart pants after the waterbrooks;" of the falling even—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul." It must assume the passion of an exclusive love—"Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." God will hardly converse with a man who prefers the converse of his fellow men. God can not be the companion of odd moments, the friend called in when more distinguished or more exciting companions have failed. When he is first, and the rest at a long interval are second; when heart and flesh are crying out and the vast treasure of the affections is staked upon finding him and being in communion with him, then, and not till then, a man begins to "dwell in the secret place of the Most High," and to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Brotherhood is not a matter of clime, color, or condition. "All ye" is the Master's declaration. That admits of no black or white, red or yellow, rich or poor, wise or foolish.

All safety is due to law. All danger is due to sin. Law is a rule of action—sin is a violation of that rule. Therefore, all sensible people, who consult their own security, should encourage law by discouraging sin.—*Rev. J. T. Harrison*.